

# ONTARIO WILL SECURE CHEAP ELECTRIC POWER.

## Government Control of Rates Policy That Has Now Been Adopted.

## POWER BILL WAS READ IN HOUSE.

## Commission Will Regulate Prices That Companies May Charge.

Will Have Powers of Expropriation Where Rates Are Not Considered Reasonable—Provisions of Act to Apply to Existing as Well as Future Companies—Government May Transmit Electrical Energy to Municipalities Under Certain Conditions—Hon. Mr. Ross Cited Act of 1903 as Foundation of the Government Bill.

To Hon. Mr. Beck fell the honor of introducing in the Legislature yesterday afternoon the Government's "power bill," which had been looked forward to with considerable interest. "The Minister of Power," as he has been called, owing to his enthusiastic espousal of the cheap power cause, and his work as a member and Chairman in connection with the Hydro-electric Power Commission, did not speak at any length. He confined himself almost entirely to a clear explanation of the bill, which was read a first time, and which bears the title "An act to provide for the transmission of electrical power to municipalities." During the course of his remarks Mr. Beck said that within a few hours he had conversed with a lawyer of excellent standing, associated with prominent capitalists, who were prepared to undertake to construct works and deliver power at the prices mentioned in the first report of the Hydro-electric Power Commission, that dealing with Niagara Falls.

The bill provides for the fixing of rates of light, heat, power, and gas companies in all parts of the Province by a commission of the same name as that now in existence; the expropriation of existing development plants and transmission lines or the undertaking of such works by the commission with money raised by the Government, for which municipalities supplied with power must eventually pay. Premier Whitney, who took part in the discussion, made it quite clear that the Government did not anticipate that the drastic clauses of the bill would have to be put into operation. They were there because the measure would be useless without them, but he had "every reason to hope and believe" that the object the Government aimed at—namely, the furnishing of cheap power to the people—would be obtained with-

## FEATURES OF THE POWER BILL.

The Hydro-electric Power Commission of Ontario is to fix rates of light, heat, power and of gas companies in any part of the Province.

This provision to apply to existing as well as future companies.

The Government may authorize the commission to expropriate power plants and transmission lines, and to develop and transmit electrical energy to municipalities, distributing companies and railway companies.

Municipalities obtaining such energy from the commission to pay back to the commission on a specified plan the cost of the necessary works, the money for which is to be raised by the Government and expended by the commission.

In the discussion following the introduction of the bill the Premier stated that he had every reason to hope and believe that the drastic powers (in relation to expropriation or Government development and transmission) would not have to be exercised by the Government. This bears out The Globe's statement of yesterday that the existing power companies are prepared to accept the control of rates by the commission.

out putting them into effect. In this connection The Globe understands that some of the companies developing and transmitting Niagara Falls power are already expressing their willingness to enter into agreements with municipalities and distributing companies at rates to be fixed by the commission, so that cheap power in the territory served by the Falls is practically assured. There is reason to believe that for the present, at any rate, the existing Power Commission will be continued, with Hon. Mr. Beck at its head, as the act provides that the members, other than any member of the Cabinet, shall be paid salaries fixed by the Government. Announcement may shortly be expected on this point, however.

### Foundation of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Ross cited the act of 1903 as the foundation of the Government bill, and, reading sections I. and XIV of the act, stated that all the powers of acquiring or developing and transmitting, distributing, and operating electric power covered by the new bill were covered by the old. The commission by the old act was to be appointed by the municipalities, but he could see no difference between that and one appointed by the Government. Mr. Graham said that, so far as his constituency was concerned, the bill was merely in the air. He thought the municipalities, which had now reached the limit of taxation permitted them, would be unable to take advantage of the bill. Mr. Preston (Brant) elicited the statement that the

Government considered the Dominion Government had displayed a friendly attitude in bringing in the bill to license the power companies.

### Mr. Beck Explains the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Beck, in introducing and moving the first reading of the measure, said its general object was to provide means by which the Government may associate themselves with municipalities for obtaining power and transmitting it to municipalities. The act provides for a commission of three persons to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor, such commission to have power to appoint expert engineers and secretaries. The commission shall be known as "the Hydro-electric Power Commission of Ontario," and shall consist of three members who shall hold office during pleasure. Clauses enable the commission to furnish plans and specifications and estimates to municipal Corporations on application. The Government will not be bound by and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions in the plans or specifications. The municipalities may submit by-laws in the manner prescribed by the consolidated municipal act of 1903, authorizing the entering into contracts with the commission for securing electrical power. If such by-laws receive the consent of a majority of the electors qualified to vote thereon, such contracts may be entered into between the commission and the municipality, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. After the latter approves of such a contract the commission may proceed to deliver to the municipality the power desired, and the municipality "may receive, use, supply and distribute such electrical power or energy upon such terms and subject to such conditions as to rates and otherwise as the commission may from time to time prescribe."

The commission may purchase or otherwise obtain power at certain development plants, build transmission lines and deliver it to municipalities. The latter will become directly responsible and incur liability for the cost.

### Power For the Railways.

The commission is authorized to supply power to railways and distributing companies. Any net profit made by the commission in supplying such concerns, after making due provisions for the cost of works through which the power is supplied, "shall be applied in payment of the cost of maintaining the works, if any, acquired or constructed and operated by the commission for the purpose of transmitting power to municipal corporations."

Agreements may be made between the commission and railway companies for the use of railway rights of way for transmission lines.

### Expropriation Powers.

Power is conferred upon the commission to report to the Government designating "such lands, water privileges, waterpowers of the lands, works, machinery and plant, or any portion thereof, of any company or individual," operating or using any water privilege or waterpower or transmitting electrical or other power or energy, which should in the opinion of the commission "be purchased, acquired, leased, taken or expropriated, developed, operated or used by the commission for the purpose of this act," or may designate what quantity of power produced or purchased by such company or individual the commission requires for the purposes of the act.

The Government may from time to time give to the commission authority to acquire by purchase, lease or expropriation lands and works, the property of any company or individual, used for the generating of electrical energy or for the transmission thereof. This applies to both development and transmission companies. The commission may also order the whole or any part of the power produced by development plants to be delivered to the commission. In case of expropriation being exercised the commission shall have all the powers provided under the statutes, which are conferred on the Minister of Public Works in the event of his taking lands or property for the public uses of the